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FROM THE CHAIR



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Understanding networks

The members of EuroFM Network think it is important to collaborate, establish and develop relationships with various FM stakeholders – internal and external – in order to enhance the aligned FM voice and reduce the fragmentation of FM industry. That was one of the main reasons to establish EuroFM Network decades ago.

When considering EuroFM Network's mission and being a network organization, we plan to collaborate and build the relationships so that we have our doors open to all parties. The relationships are based on mutual trust, aligned goals and win-win thinking.

At the moment there are few discussions going on about the challenges of misaligned FM voice and the fragmentation of FM industry. For us – FM professionals, it may be worthwhile asking, whether we should “fight” against the fragmentation but – instead – to understand it and act accordingly. Here networking and networking organizations represent potential platforms and tools to enhance the understanding of different market phenomena.

At the same time, consumer (end-user) behavior is changing in dramatic ways. People expect organizations with which they engage to follow suit. Are we able to develop the experience of our members to fulfill this consumerization trend, where members request more mobile, nimble, personalized, and efficient engagements, similar to the experiences they have with an Amazon or Netflix?

Networking has been recognized as a powerful tool for business people

and professionals. You get greater access to information, when you know more people. It is also easier to influence others, when you know them, instead of influencing strangers. The creators of various social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter have been developed on the presumption that their social networking tools help people build their networks and remain better connected than ever.

The essence of networking

Many research on power and influence show that people who are well networked are three times more influential than people who aren't. In EuroFM Network we have noticed that their power is based on the social capital they have developed in building relationships with the people in their network and more importantly: not only by accepting invitations in LinkedIn, Facebook or similar. It is easy to get connected, but it is more challenging to stay connected.

Network power is based on the strength of your relationships. How much attention you command, when you engage people and organizations in your network; how attractive you are as a member of other people's networks. The attractiveness may be based on expertise, sharing ideas, knowing powerful people and having easy access to them whenever necessary. In the end, however, one has more power in the network with the people one knows the best: with long-time colleagues, close friends, and others with whom one has been able to develop mutual trust and respect.



Building a sustainable relationship is very often based on five important skills: listening, accepting, respecting, caring and trust. Listening means clearing your own mind from distracting thoughts; being open minded, receptive to other's ideas, showing genuine empathy and sometimes even being silent. It is equally important to accept other people's values, beliefs and behavior without any prejudice or judgment. Respect has to do with showing sincere interest in other opinions and feelings as well as treating people with dignity. Furthermore, caring is an emotional connection, genuine support to solving other people's problems and giving them more than expected. Finally, trust is a combination of four skills mentioned above: demonstrating honesty, reliability and understanding cultures, languages and values.

Start with yourself

It is possible to establish the described relationships with people you meet in networks. However, it is crucial to sustain contact with people over an extended period, have meaningful exchanges with them. This requires setting yourself aside, sharing what you have and learn from others. Personally, I have found out that you must start with yourself, if you want to be successful in establishing cross-cultural relationships: align your character to the qualities that you preach.

Having over 25 years of experience in networking within the FM industry, we at EuroFM Network have learned that there is no substitute for direct personal connections, the history and the culture of giving and taking (in this order). In this way you are

able to develop that feeling of mutual trust amongst your members, which automatically leads to "the cultivating of mutually beneficial, give and take and win-win-win relationships". According to many FM professionals Facility Management is the binding factor between internal and external, between the organization and the market. Organizations and individuals must collaborate more and avoid reinventing the wheel over and over again. Let's open our doors a bit more, share our knowledge and make it available to each other. EuroFM Network offers a platform for this. We have our doors open to all stakeholders and enhance the culture of mutual trust, aligned goals and win-win-win-thinking.